

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

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PLS PASS TO HERBERT LEVIN, DCM COLOMBO, PRATT BYRD

FOLLOWING REPEAT COLOMBO 3064 ACTION SECSTATE 22 AUG 77

QUOTE

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, CE

SUBJ: SUMMARY OF VIOLENCE IN SRI LANKA - AUGUST 20-22

REF: COLOMBO 3030

1. IN AN EFFORT TO HALT THE VIOLENCE THAT CONTINUED ON AUGUST 19 AND 20, THE PRIME MINISTER ANNOUNCED AN ISLAND-WIDE CURFEW EFFECTIVE FROM 1500 AUGUST 20 TO 0400 AUGUST 22. THIS STEP SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN TAKEN MORE AS A PRECAUTIONARY MEASURE THAN AS AN INDICATION OF UNCONTROLLED WIDESPREAD VIOLENCE. BACK-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ING UP HIS CURFEW ORDER, THE PM EXHORTED THE POLICE AND MILITARY TO BE FIRM IN EXECUTING THEIR AUTHORITY AND TO DO EVERYTHING NECESSARY WITHIN THE LAW TO RE-ESTABLISH ORDER, INCLUDING THE SHOOTING OF VIOLATORS. HE PROMISED TO BACK THE SECURITY FORCES TO THE HILT, AS LONG AS THEY PERFORMED THEIR DUTIES WITHIN THE LAW.

2. AS OF MONDAY MORNING, AUGUST 22, THE PM'S FIRM ACTION APPEARS TO HAVE TAKEN HOLD AND TO HAVE BROUGHT THE SITUATION UNDER CONTROL, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE STILL REPORTS OF MINOR INCIDENTS. THERE HAS BEEN A DEARTH OF NEWS SINCE FRIDAY CONCERNING THE EXTENT OF VIOLENCE. (THERE IS AN UNCONFIRMED REPORT THAT THE WIRE SERVICES HAVE BEEN PROHIBITED FROM FILING STORIES FROM SRI LANKA.) MONITORING OF POLICE RADIO BANDS, HOWEVER, INDICATES THAT WHILE THERE WERE SPORADIC REPORTS OF MINOR INCIDENTS ON AUGUST 21, THERE WERE NO REPORTS OF MAJOR INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE. AGAIN PROBABLY AS A PRECAUTIONARY MEASURE, THERE WILL BE AN ISLAND-WIDE CURFEW FROM 2000 AUGUST 22 TO 0400 AUGUST 23.

3. THERE HAS BEEN NO OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE DEATH TOLL SO FAR, BUT, POSSIBLY BASED ON WIRE SERVICE REPORTS, A FOREIGN BROADCAST GAVE THE NUMBER AS 25. ACCORDING TO LOCAL PRESS REPORTERS, HOWEVER, SPECULATION IS THAT THE NUMBER OF DEATHS AS OF SUNDAY NIGHT EXCEEDED 40. WE DO NOT HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT THE BREAKDOWN OF TAMIL VERSUS SINHALESE DEATHS MIGHT BE, BUT THERE IS EVIDENCE OF GROWING TAMIL CONCERN FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY. A RELIABLE SOURCE IN KANDY SAID THAT TWO TO THREE THOUSAND TAMILS HAVE LEFT THEIR HOMES AND HAVE SOUGHT REFUGE AT TRINITY COLLEGE. BOTH GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE SRI LANKA ORGANIZATIONS ARE TRYING TO MEET THOSE REFUGEES' IMMEDIATE NEEDS FOR FOOD AND CLOTHING. ACCORDING TO A FOREIGN BUSINESSMAN IN COLOMBO, SOME OF HIS TAMIL WORKERS WHO SOUGHT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ADVICE FROM THE POLICE ABOUT WHAT TO DO WERE TOLD IT WOULD BE BEST FOR THEM TO GO TO JAFFNA.

4. TO ADD TO THE CONFUSION, WE HAVE SEVERAL UNCONFIRMED REPORTS THAT SOME GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS BELIEVE THAT THE INCIDENTS SUBSEQUENT TO THOSE OF THE FIRST TWO DAYS ARE POLITICALLY INSPIRED BY THE SLFP OR THE COMMUNIST PARTY TO EMBARRASS THE GOVERNMENT. APPARENTLY FEELING THAT THE SLFP IS BEHIND THE TROUBLE IN KANDY, THE POLICE THERE HAVE PLACED FOUR SLFP MEMBERS UNDER HOUSE ARREST, INCLUDING RECENT UNSUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES H.M. NAVARATNE, FORMER DEPUTY MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, AND ANURUDDUA RATWATTE.

5. COMMENT: THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT POLITICAL MOTIVATION BEING BEHIND THE CONTINUED VIOLENCE. THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS OF CLASHES BETWEEN UNP AND SLFP MEMBERS IN KANDY AND IN COLOMBO, INCLUDING POSSIBLY ONE SLFP MEMBER HAVING BEEN SHOT BY A UNP'ER, BUT THESE SEEM TO BE MORE IN THE NATURE OF TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION TO SETTLE POLITICAL GRUDGES. WRIGGINS. UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER".

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